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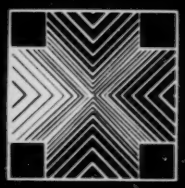

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The Elusive Exodus:
Emigration from the United States

by Robert Warren
and Ellen Percy Kraly

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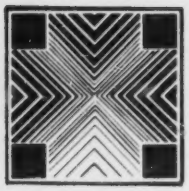


The Elusive Exodus: Emigration from the United States

In Summary

The waves of immigration that have swept the United States have been welcomed, decried, legislated, and regulated, but always the focus of public attention. An outgoing tide of emigration has occurred in tandem; while it has been counted during some periods, for the most part emigration has been ignored.

Piecing together data from a handful of different sources, demographers Robert Warren of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and Ellen Percy Kraly of Colgate University have assembled a statistical sketch of U.S. emigration.

Their conclusions may come as a surprise to many. Since the turn of the century the ratio of immigration to emigration has been 3-to-1. The 30 million legal immigrants the U.S. admitted between 1900 and 1980 must be balanced against 10 million emigrants who left to settle elsewhere.

It is not surprising that a number of former immigrants left disillusioned, or chose to retire in the "old country," or moved on to unexplored Canadian frontiers. More startling are the recent trends in U.S. citizen emigration that Warren and Kraly identified. Combing foreign immigration data revealed that over the past few decades U.S. citizens also are emigrating and this trend gained momentum during the 1960s and remained steady during the 1970s. Warren and Kraly report that more than 100,000 U.S. citizens are counted as immigrants to other countries each year.

Where are these U.S. citizens going? Foreign immigration data indicate that more than one-third of U.S. emigrants settled in Canada or Mexico. European countries were the second most popular destination, with the United Kingdom and West Germany receiving the most U.S. emigrants and the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Norway receiving large flows in proportion to their populations. Among countries outside of North America and Europe, Japan and Australia received the most U.S. emigrants. Hong Kong received a significant number relative to its size.

Warren and Kraly stress that much more information is needed on emigration. Since the INS discontinued collecting emigration data in 1957, estimates of emigration have been used and these estimates have been low. Currently, the Census Bureau estimates emigration to total 40,000 a year. The Census Bureau's analysis of the 1980 census, however, used emigration figures of 160,000 per year during the decade of the 1970s.

To illustrate the magnitude of recent emigration trends, Warren and Kraly compared the number of non-U.S. citizen emigrants (former U.S. immigrants leaving the United States who did not become naturalized citizens) to the number of undocumented immigrants counted in the 1980 census. In the Census Bureau's evaluation of the 1980 census these two flows were of roughly the same dimension—1.2 million non-U.S. citizen emigrants vs. 1.5 million undocumented immigrants. While the accuracy of both these figures has been questioned, the comparison indicates that emigration is a significant aspect of U.S. population dynamics, given too little attention to date.

Of what use would more detailed information on emigration be? Warren and Kraly suggest several applications, including:

Immigration policy. An understanding of emigration would allow the United States to institute yearly levels of immigration based on net rather than gross immigration. A "revolving door" policy could be set up whereby extra immigrants could be admitted for non-U.S. citizen emigrants who choose to leave.

Population estimates. Agencies of the state and federal government as well as private businesses rely heavily on population estimates in their planning and budgeting. Data on emigration would enhance the accuracy of national population estimates.

To find out the "hows, whys, whos, and wheres" of U.S. emigration in an efficient and cost-effective manner, Warren and Kraly suggest adding questions on emigration to existing population surveys. Above all, they caution, data collection methods should not restrict or impede travel in any way.

Finally, say Warren and Kraly, more information on emigration has the potential to turn upside down common thought on the topic of international migration. "The facts appear to contradict the notion that everyone wants to come to the United States and no one wants to leave," they say.

The Elusive Exodus: Emigration from the United States

by Robert Warren and Ellen Percy Kraly

Members of the U.S. diplomatic community, Athens.

In a society founded on the assumption of individual freedom, the ability to leave the country unhindered is a cherished right. Persons who move out of the United States do so not only unnoticed but also unrecorded. In fact, statistics on emigration from the United States were last collected during the Eisenhower administration. Despite the deficiencies in the data, enough information is available to determine that during the 20th century the United States gained about 30 million immigrants and lost approximately 10 million people to emigration. Currently, more than 150,000 people, mostly former immigrants, leave each year.

A close look at emigration trends alters our perception of the impact immigration has on U.S. society. The facts appear to contradict the notion that everyone wants to move to the United States but no one wants to leave. It is not surprising that some portion of the immigrant population eventually departs. A relatively new phenomenon appears to have gained momentum over the past few decades: U.S. citizens also are emigrating in increasing numbers.

Statistics on emigration trends will allow the United States to develop a more flexible and responsive immigration policy. Emigration data also are needed to compute accurate U.S. population estimates and projections, used in both business planning and federal budgeting and policy analysis.

Collecting timely information about emigration poses unique problems. The only official monitoring of emigration by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was discontinued in 1957 because the data were considered to underestimate permanent departures. The U.S. Bureau of the Census

Business run by a U.S. citizen, Panama City, 1955.

This U.S. citizen emigrated to Australia with her Australian husband, 1977.

abandoned the census of U.S. citizens living abroad for similar reasons. The patterns of emigration described in this report have been pieced together from a variety of data sources, including *immigration* statistics collected by other countries. The data sources and demographic techniques are discussed on page 16. In this report, "emigrant" refers exclusively to legal U.S. residents departing the United States. The term "non-U.S. citizen" refers to immigrants from other nations residing legally in the United States.

This review and compilation of emigration statistics demonstrates that emigration from the United States is a significant demographic phenomenon. These trends have implications for several areas of U.S. public policy, notably national population dynamics and projected growth, and U.S. immigration policy. The results presented here also demonstrate that we need to know more. Mechanisms should be developed within the federal statistical system to provide policymakers with reliable and comprehensive information about U.S. emigration.

The Relationship Between Immigration and Emigration

The level of immigration to the United States has fluctuated widely during this century due to wars, changing economic conditions, and the limits on immigration imposed in the mid-1920s.[1] Although emigration was not measured completely during all periods, a substantial counterflow has accompanied immigration, regardless of historical circumstances.

Historical trends. The 1908 Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration stated that "the rapidity of communication and the cheapness of passenger traffic in recent years has facilitated the migration, especially of the laboring classes, from one country to another." The report also observed that "the facility and cheapness of communication, especially in ocean travel, has likewise contributed to emigration from the United States."[2]

Statistics on the return migration of former immigrants were first collected in 1908 after immigration reached an all-time peak of 1.3 million in 1907. Section 12 of the Immigration Act of 1907 required that data on the number of non-U.S. citizens leaving the United States be collected in order to monitor the net increase in population due to immigration.

The wide assortment of data sources needed to construct a historical review of U.S. emigration often excludes or underestimates U.S. citizen emigration. The estimates of emigration shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 (pages 4 and 5) are based on INS statistics and estimates of emigration derived through analysis of both U.S. census counts and INS data (see Methods section, page 16).[3] Statistics on U.S. citizen emigration were collected by the INS between 1918 and 1950. Some of the U.S. citizens who emigrated during that period were naturalized citizens and many of the remainder were probably U.S.-born children of departing former immigrants.

Evidence indicates that hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens emigrated during the past few decades, but the figures are not precise enough to be included in this comparison. (They are discussed, however, later in this report.) Therefore, the figures shown in Table 1 tend to underestimate emigration, particularly for the period since 1960.

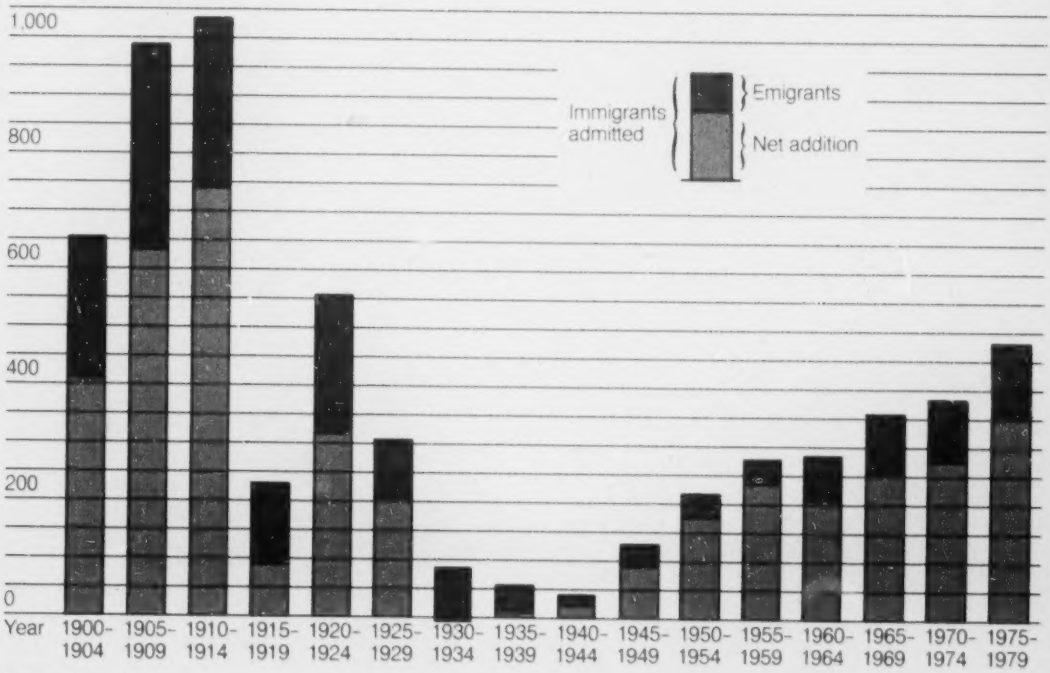
Figure 1 illustrates the fluctuations in immigration

levels and the relationship between immigration and emigration during this century. The bars represent *annual averages* for five-year periods. Although more the 13 million immigrants arrived between 1900 and World War I, the *net* addition to the U.S. population was approximately 9 million because more than 4 million non-U.S. citizens returned to Europe during that period. Most of those who emigrated lived in the United States for only a short period; about three-quarters of the emigrants departed less than five years after their arrival.

During World War I, net migration came to a virtual standstill. In 1918 and 1919, the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants for possibly the first time in U.S. history. After World War I, both immigration and emigration increased sharply but remained below prewar levels. Large-scale immigration resumed in the early 1920s, followed by severe numerical restrictions on immigration from countries outside the Western Hemisphere. The restrictions held net immigration to about 200,000 annually until the Depression began. Figure 1 also illustrates the impact of the Depression and World War II on immigration and emigration. Immigration fell to its lowest level since the Civil War, averaging less than 50,000 each year between 1931 and 1945. Emigration was higher than immigration in each year between 1932 and 1936.

After World War II, immigration gradually increased, but levels of immigration and emigration were restrained by the economic effects of the war thoughout Europe. Since 1965, immigration levels have increased more rapidly due to changes in immigration laws and the large flows of refugees from Cuba, Southeast Asia and other areas. The annual level of non-U.S. citizen *emigration* also appears to have increased steadily during the past few decades, passing the 100,000 level in the late 1960s.

Figure 1
Annual average number of U.S. immigrants admitted, U.S. emigrants departing, and net addition to U.S. population, for five-year periods, 1900-1979



Source: ref. 1,3

Italian family celebrates the return of their son (upper left) with his U.S. citizen wife and U.S.-born daughter, 1959.

Table 1:

Estimates of U.S. immigration, U.S. emigration and net additions to the U.S. population, 1900-1979

(Numbers in thousands)

Period	Net Addition	Immigrants	Emigration		
			Total	Non-U.S. citizen	U.S. citizen
All periods	20,169	30,450	10,281	9,492	789
1975-1979	1,782	2,411	629	629	*
1970-1974	1,376	1,923	547	547	*
1965-1969	1,285	1,795	510	510	*
1960-1964	1,028	1,418	390	390	*
1955-1959	1,190	1,401	211	211	*
1950-1954	885	1,099	214	214	*
1945-1949	468	653	185	94	91
1940-1944	109	205	96	57	39
1935-1939	66	272	206	153	53
1930-1934	-16	427	443	336	107
1925-1929	1,009	1,520	511	390	121
1920-1924	1,601	2,775	1,174	893	281
1915-1919	458	1,173	715	618	97
1910-1914	3,733	5,175	1,442	1,442	*
1905-1909	3,154	4,947	1,793	1,793	*
1900-1904	2,041	3,256	1,215	1,215	*

*Not available

Source: ref. 1, 3

Table 2:

Estimates for the United States of legal immigration, non-U.S. citizen emigration, and recorded undocumented immigration for selected areas, 1970-1980

(Numbers in thousands, percentages in parentheses)

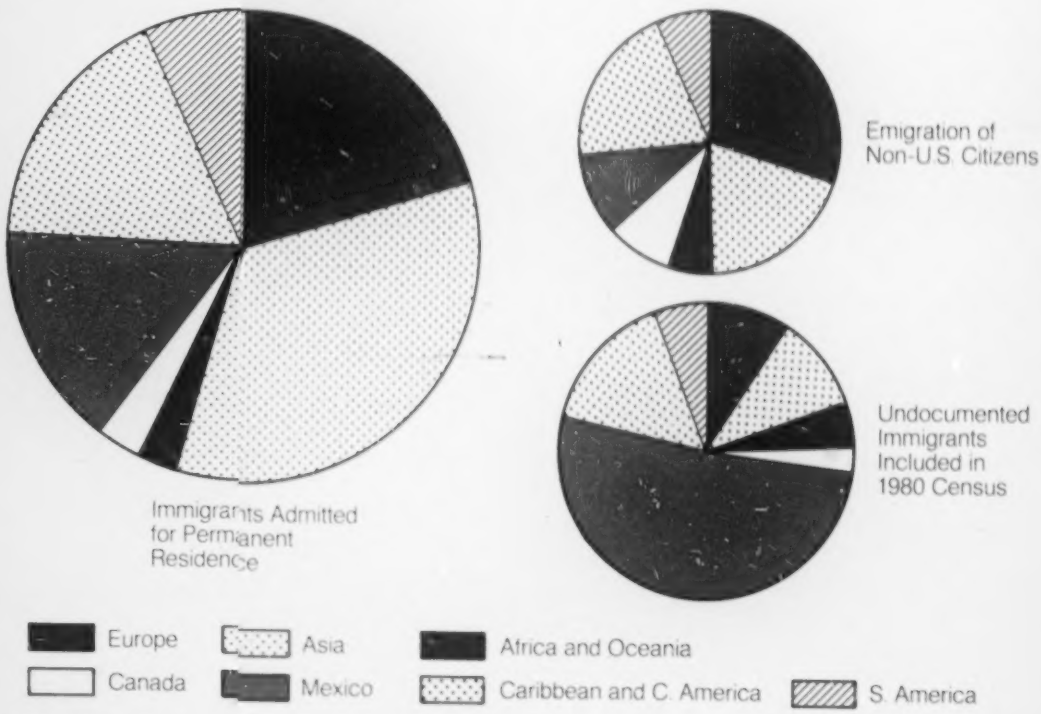
Area	Legal immigrants	Non-U.S. citizen emigrants	Undocumented immigrants counted in 1980 census
All areas	3,938 (100)	1,177 (100)	1,517 (100)
Europe	805 (20)	346 (29)	94 (6)
Asia	1,335 (34)	239 (20)	141 (9)
Africa and Oceania	121 (3)	62 (5)	67 (4)
Canada	112 (3)	97 (8)	22 (1)
Mexico	614 (16)	120 (10)	902 (59)
Caribbean and C. America	688 (17)	238 (20)	208 (14)
S. America	263 (7)	75 (6)	82 (5)

Columns add to less than 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: ref. 4

Figure 2

Comparison of selected sources of migration to and from the United States, 1970-1980



Source: ref. 4

English class for U.S. immigrants; some choose not to stay in the United States.

Recent trends. In 1984, the Census Bureau reported that the 1980 census counted 1.5 million undocumented immigrants who entered the country between 1970 and 1980.[4] Estimates of non-U.S. citizen emigration also were derived as part of that report. These Census Bureau estimates permit us to isolate the decade of the 1970s and to compare the recorded levels of legal immigration, undocumented immigration and non-U.S. citizen emigration for that period.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show the estimates for selected areas. The figures on legal immigration are based on the detailed data maintained by the INS. The figures for emigration are low because data on U.S. citizen emigration are not precise enough to be included in this comparison.

The figures for undocumented immigrants in Table 2 and Figure 2 are limited to the number included in the 1980 census, which is below the total number in the country in 1980. How far this figure is below the number of undocumented immigrants who entered the country during the 1970s is unclear. It is possible, however, that the 1980 census counted most of the undocumented immigrants *who established residence* in the United States during the 1970s and thus the count approximately reflects the number added to the U.S. population during the period.

Figure 2 shows that the estimated number of non-U.S. citizens emigrating and undocumented migrants counted in the census were roughly of the same magnitude during the 1970s, 1.2 and 1.5 million respectively. The geographic areas involved in these two types of flows differed considerably. About half of the undocumented immigrants counted in the census came from Mexico, while the destination of half of the emigrants was either Europe or Asia.

Emigrants bound for Europe, about 30 percent, were far fewer than as recently as 20 years ago when almost all U.S. emigrants settled in Europe. Since the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act, immigration from Asia, and consequently return migration to Asia, has increased dramatically. The number of non-U.S. citizens who emigrated to Canada from the United States was just below the number of persons immigrating to the United States from Canada. Relatively few undocumented Canadians appear to have established residence in the U.S. during the 1970s.

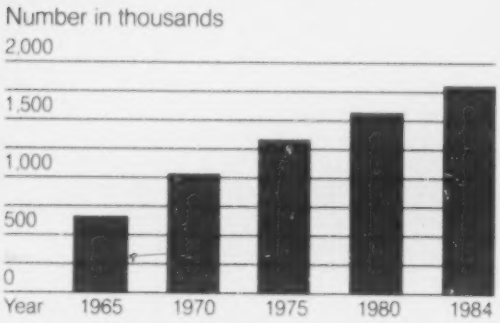
Despite the limited data, this review has shown that emigration of non-U.S. citizens has been a significant component of U.S. population dynamics. During the past few decades, emigration of U.S. citizens appears to have increased also, but the levels of permanent migration are even more difficult to assess.

Emigration of U.S. Citizens

Citizens of the United States include persons born in the United States and former immigrants who have become naturalized citizens. Consequently, to some extent, emigration patterns of U.S. citizens are related to prior patterns of immigration and naturalization in the United States. Recent patterns of U.S. citizen emigration have received very little attention. Few federal agencies need information about the departure of U.S. citizens and the sources of data that do exist often are not available in published reports.

State Department figures. The U.S. Department of State maintains figures on the number of "Americans" residing within the jurisdiction of U.S. consular

Figure 3
*U.S. State Department estimates of U.S. citizens abroad, 1965-1984**



**Does not include U.S. military personnel or their dependents.*

Source: ref. 5

posts. The data are the basis for planning evacuation strategies in the event of foreign crises.

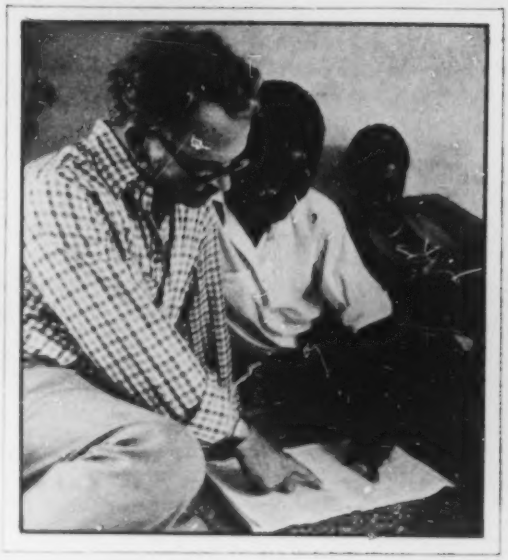
In 1984, the number of U.S. citizens living abroad was estimated at 1.8 million.[5] The figure does not include U.S. military personnel or their dependents, but it does include civilian employees of the U.S. government and their dependents. Figure 3 illustrates the estimated growth in the number of U.S. citizens living abroad during the past two decades.

State Department officials emphasize that the data in Figure 3 represent a composite of estimates submitted by individual consular officials based on highly variable information sources and calculation methods. Only about half the level is based on actual registration by citizens at consular posts, so the numbers could be somewhat inflated. Acccording to a State Department official:

"Many citizens register because they want our consular offices to know who and where they are, where they can be contacted in the event of an emergency at home or even an emergency that may arise where they are living. Registration also facilitates passport issuance because the registrant's citizenship has already been made a matter of record. Not all Americans bother to register. Many do not feel the need for doing so and there is no obligation to do so."[6]

State Department estimates of U.S. citizens abroad for 1983 were available for geographic areas. They indicate that about 37 percent resided in the nations of North and Central America and the Caribbean, with nearly 16 percent living in Canada and 14 percent in Mexico. An estimated 9 percent resided in Latin America. Approximately one-third (32 percent) of U.S. citizens abroad resided in Europe, with the largest groups in West Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy. Asia accounted for 16 percent of the total, with the largest concentrations in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and Israel), the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. The remaining 8 percent of U.S. citizens abroad were divided almost evenly between the countries of Africa and Oceania.

U.S. teacher, Kenya.



Foreign census data. It might appear that census data collected by other countries would be an excellent source of information on the U.S. population residing abroad. The counts of U.S.-born residents of a foreign country at the time of their census could simply be extracted from the data.

Unfortunately, the process is much more complex and less productive than it first appears. It requires—at a minimum—published data classified by place of birth for the national population. Such tabulations, however, exclude former U.S. immigrants returning to their country of birth. Also, to form a complete picture of U.S. citizen emigration these data would have to be compiled for all countries of the world. To estimate trends in emigration, data would be needed for consecutive censuses.

Most countries, particularly less developed countries, do not include an appropriate tabulation in the published volumes. Much of the data available from primary census sources refer to censuses conducted in the early 1960s; in late 1984, many countries had not yet completed processing the data from the 1980 round of censuses.

Available information from foreign censuses tentatively supports the State Department figures. Japan and Australia are among the countries with increas-

ing numbers of U.S. residents. U.S. citizens living in Australia increased from 17,000 in 1966 to 30,000 in 1971; the 1976 Australian census identifies 81,000 persons born in "America," a term that illustrates the ambiguity of classifications in published census tabulations.[7] The U.S.-born population counted in the censuses of Mexico increased from 97,000 in 1970 to 139,000 in 1980.[8]

To date, the best single source of comparative census data is the 1977 volume of the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*. This source is limited, however, because the compilation presents counts of the U.S.-born population from the censuses of only 25 countries. A forthcoming volume of the *Demographic Yearbook* will update these figures.

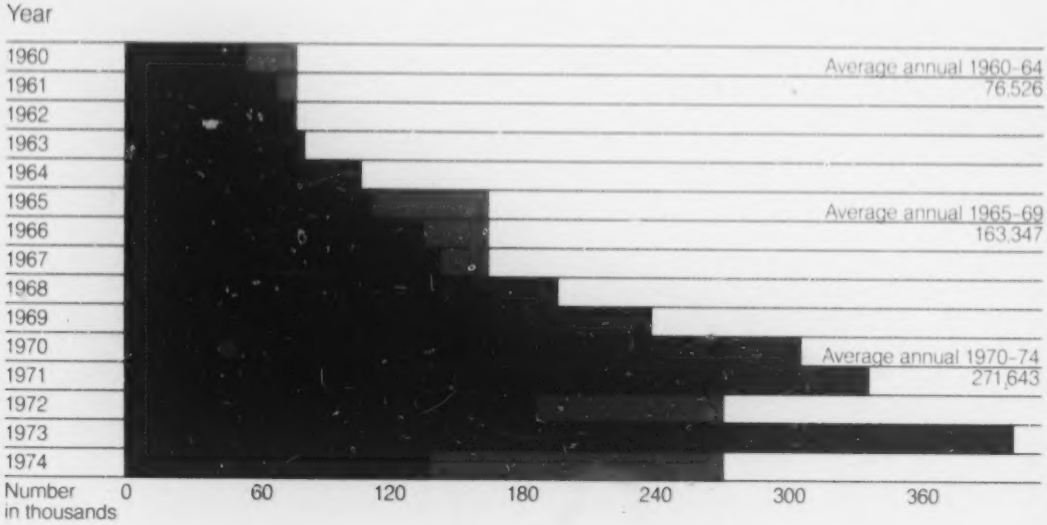
Other countries' immigration statistics. Table 29 of the U.N.'s 1977 *Demographic Yearbook* contains detailed data for countries that have submitted annual data on immigration between 1958 and 1976 by country of last permanent residence. Because most countries use legal and administrative criteria such as citizenship and work permits to identify immigrants, these figures probably represent emigration of U.S. citizens rather than return migration of former-U.S. immigrants. Thus, there probably is little overlap between these figures and the data shown in Table 1, which does not include U.S. citizen emigration after 1960.

The number of persons classified as immigrants from the United States was extracted for each of the years reported by the receiving countries. There could be significant biases in the data due to different procedures used by countries to define long-term immigrants and to distinguish these immigrants from international arrivals. Those countries that classify *all* international arrivals, including tourists, as immigrants in U.N. statistics are excluded.

Figure 4 illustrates the number of U.S. citizens reported as permanent migrants in foreign immigration statistics each year between 1960 and 1974. The unevenness of the figures reflects changes in the number of countries reporting data in each year as well as changes in statistical procedures. The green blocks "smooth" this effect by indicating the average annual level of emigration from the U.S. for three five-year intervals.

Even allowing for lack of comparability in the data and later return movement to the United States, the level of emigration from the U.S. is substantial, exceeding 100,000 each year since 1964. Some portion of the flow could be overestimated because countries define and measure immigration differently. On the other hand, it is equally plausible that the levels shown in Figure 4 underrepresent current trends because not all countries collected data and because data refer to the previous decade.

Figure 4
Reported immigration to selected countries from the United States, 1960-1974



Source: ref. 7

Figure 5 illustrates average annual emigration by continent for the same time periods. Emigration to Europe may have leveled off during recent years, although it is difficult to tell because data are available for fewer countries after 1974. The increase in emigration to North America reflects flows from the U.S. reported by Mexico. These statistics need to be carefully evaluated. The U.S.-born population in the 1980 census of Mexico was only 42,000 higher than the 1970 census. This indicates that the number of U.S. immigrants that Mexico reported to the U.N. Statistical Office included both permanent and temporary migrants.

The trends in emigration and shifts in destination of emigrants shown in Figure 5 reflect changes in the number of countries submitting data to the U.N. Statistical Office. Between 1960 and 1974, the total number of countries of destination included in the U.N. statistics varied between 29 (1960) and 46 (1968). In order to control for this problem, Table 3 presents immigration statistics for the 18 countries that reported regularly during the 1960 to 1976 period. Approximately 80 percent of U.S. residents reported as immigrants to other countries were bound for these countries. The annual figures used to construct Table 3 indicate that immigration of U.S. citizens to these countries increased during the 1960s and remained stable during the 1970s. The large number of U.S. citizens recorded in these international migration statistics form a strong basis for arguing for more research on the process of emigration.

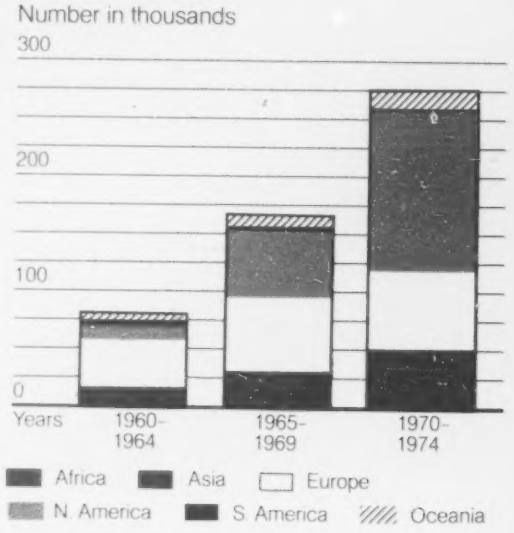
Reasons for emigration. While we do not know the exact means by which countries identify immigrants and whether for analytic purposes we can consider all those persons reflected in the U.N. data as immigrants, the data do reveal high levels of emigration from the U.S. and geographic patterns of emigration that have changed during the past few decades.

The statistical evidence clearly needs further critical attention; the underlying movtivation for this large outflow of U.S. citizens also deserves study. A recent *New York Times* article described the community of business men and women living and working in London:

"Most of the 40,000 to 50,000 United States business men and women living here will go home, three, four or five years from now—back to the land of efficient telephones, relatively docile trade unions and cold beer.

"But there are other Americans who settle into London more or less permanently. Some stay because they like the city's ambiance, its civility, its sophistication, its rich social and cultural life. Some remain because they find exceptional opportunities there. They tend to lead thoroughly British lives; their employees and most of their friends are British. And they look down a little, although they wouldn't admit it, on their compatriots who spend the bulk of their time in Britain surrounded by Americans at work and play."[9]

Figure 5
Average annual immigration to world regions from the United States, 1960-1974



Source: ref. 7

A variety of reasons for expatriation are suggested here, and many more questions are raised: How permanent is migration abroad? Are U.S. citizens rejecting aspects of life in the United States or being attracted to specific lifestyles abroad? Does working abroad reflect a stage in the career patterns among corporate executives?

We have a sense of where U.S. residents are going and some evidence that the pace of departure is increasing, but the statistical foundation is incomplete. At this time, we can only speculate on such basic demographic measures as length of stay and purpose of migration.

Public Policy and Statistical Implications

This review of emigration from the United States, despite the limited data, indicates that immigration is accompanied by a substantial counterflow and that the number of U.S.-born persons living abroad has increased sharply in recent decades. What does this

Table 3:

Average annual immigration to selected countries from the United States, 1960-1976

Country of destination	Total years reported	Average annual immigration from the United States[1] 1960 to 1976	1970 to 1974	1965 to 1969	1960 to 1964
All countries		180,200	281,000	151,700	66,100
Argentina	14	400	600	300	300
Australia	15	8,500	12,800	8,500	4,400
Belgium	16	3,100	4,300	3,200	1,700
Brazil	13	1,000	900	1,100	1,100
Canada	11	21,900	24,600	19,900	*
France	14	900	1,400	900	400
Germany	15	24,800	27,800	26,400	21,600
Hong Kong	12	2,900	3,400	2,000	*
Italy	17	2,700	5,400	1,400	300
Japan	17	17,200	23,400	15,100	12,100
Kenya	17	500	400	800	200
Mexico	13	64,600	142,000	40,600	17,300
Netherlands	13	3,400	3,800	3,100	*
New Zealand	15	1,400	2,300	1,300	1,000
Nigeria	13	1,400	1,700	1,100	1,300
Norway	17	2,900	3,200	2,800	2,600
Sweden	17	1,700	1,700	1,600	1,800
United Kingdom	12	20,900	21,300	21,500	*

*Data are available for fewer than 3 years of the 5-year period.

[1]Averages are based on the number of years for which data are reported.

Source: ref. 7

movement mean to our society and how would more complete and detailed information be useful?

Immigration policy. Recognizing and measuring the emigration of former U.S. immigrants would allow U.S. immigration policy to become more flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. Since numerical limitations were first introduced in the 1920s, the annual level of admissions has been based on the concept of *gross* rather than *net* immigration. That is, annual figures were set as the maximum number allowable during the year rather than as the net addition to the U.S. population of immigrants minus emigrants. Measuring or estimating emigration each year would make it possible to change to a concept of net immigration.

This raises a variety of policy alternatives. The annual number of non-U.S. citizen emigrants, for example, could be added to a pool of visas that could grow or shrink from year to year depending on the level of emigration and the reuse of the numbers. It would be possible to create such a pool of visas and still keep the 270,000 person limit set by the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Administration, after consulting Congress, could specify the uses of these visas each year. Priority might be given to emigrants who want to re-establish residence in the United States.

The remaining numbers could be set aside for emergency situations such as the Cubans who arrived in the 1980 Mariel boatlift and the many thousands of Salvadorans who have fled the violence of their country's civil war.

The numbers also could be used to speed up the reunification of the families of immigrants already in the United States. Immediate relatives (spouses, minor children and parents) of legal immigrants from

Table 4:
Estimated components of the U.S. resident population change, 1970-1980

1970 Census count	203,301,000
Change, 1970 to 1980:	
Births adjusted for underregistration	+33,543,000
Deaths occurring in the United States	−19,324,000
Legal immigrants, refugees and parolees	+4,370,000
Emigration of legal U.S. residents	−1,578,000
Net addition of undocumented immigrants entering 1970-1980	+1,517,000
Other*	+4,716,000
Net change	+23,244,000
1980 Census count	226,545,000

*Includes change in coverage of the censuses, net movement of Armed Forces and civilian citizens to and from the United States, errors in the estimated components of change, and a few small categories such as death occurring to Armed Forces overseas and net migration between the United States and Puerto Rico.

Source: ref. 11

Children of U.S. citizens residing in Brazil.

some countries must wait years to obtain visas to join family members in the United States. In some cases, the long wait probably leads to unauthorized immigration. In January 1984, the number of immediate relatives waiting to join legal immigrants in the U.S. stood at more than a quarter million, including 83,000 from Mexico alone.[10]

U.S. population estimates. Better information on emigration also is important for the Census Bureau's estimates of the U.S. population between censuses. Population estimates and projections are used extensively by federal agencies and private businesses.

The formula for distributing billions of dollars each year in federal funds to state governments is also based on these population estimates. To the extent that emigration does not occur in proportion to the population of each state, the failure to allow adequately for emigration can distort the population estimates used to distribute federal funds.

The components of change of the U.S. population between 1970 and 1980 are shown in Table 4. These figures are based on analyses conducted at the Census Bureau as part of the 1980 census evaluation.[10] The population grew by more than 23 million during the decade. Births and deaths played the major role. Legal admission of immigrants and refugees during the decade was estimated at 4.4 million.

For their evaluation of the 1980 census count, the Census Bureau estimated that emigration for the decade totaled 1.6 million. (Their figure is slightly *higher* than our estimate of 1.2 million because a small estimate of U.S. citizen emigration is included.) The Census Bureau's estimate of 1.6 million emigrants implies an average of 160,000 emigrants per year. Although the Census Bureau used this level of emigration in the figures used to evaluate the 1980 census, they continue to use the much lower figure of 40,000 emigrants per year in computing the population estimates for the period since the 1980 census. The low estimate of emigration is a holdover from 1957, when the INS stopped collecting emigration data.

The Census Bureau's population estimates made since the 1980 census are based on reliable and timely information on births, deaths and legal immigration available through the vital registration system and the INS. Sources of data for emigration are much less reliable and undocumented immigrants are not included in the population estimates.

Since *no* information is available on emigration and undocumented immigration for the period since 1980, these two relatively small components of change account for most of the error in the current population estimates. As we have seen, non-U.S. citizen emigration alone has probably been at or above the 100,000 level each year for the past two decades. In addition, only a small allowance has been

made for U.S. citizens living abroad permanently, and no estimates are available for groups such as diplomats, missionaries, and employees of multinational corporations who reside outside the United States for considerable periods. Census Bureau officials are now considering using much higher estimates of emigration in the population estimates program.

U.S. Population Projections. The lack of data on emigration also has affected the nation's population projections. Until recently, the Census Bureau used a single level of 400,000 "net" immigrants annually throughout the projection period. The term "net" was used inaccurately because only a small portion of the emigrant flow was included in the number. This overestimate of net migration and confusion of statistical concepts exaggerates the impact of immigration on future population change.

In 1977, Charles Keely of the Population Council and Ellen Kraly replicated the Census Bureau's population projections to determine the effect of using a more appropriate level of emigration in the projection model.[11] As expected, when higher levels of emigration were incorporated, the pace of population growth during the projection period was slowed compared with the Census Bureau's projections.

Simply projecting different fixed levels of immigration and emigration, however, does not address a more fundamental shortcoming in emigration figures used in national population projections. The problem is that emigration should not be projected at a constant level; it should be computed independently for each period, as a function of the population *at risk of emigrating.*

We can demonstrate the significance of this point using projected immigration and emigration of the foreign-born population. In this illustration we assume a fixed level of future immigration and constant rates of emigration. If the level of future immigration selected for the projections produces a growing foreign-born population, then the level of emigration also will be growing, thus reducing the level of net immigration. In the Census Bureau's projections and in other illustrative "high" projections of immigration, net immigration is held constant each year, regardless of changes in the size of the foreign-born population. This tends to exaggerate the impact of immigration on future population growth by progressively underestimating the level of emigration.

During the early 1970s, the media and public uncritically accepted speculation about the growth of the U.S. undocumented population. Reports of many hundreds of thousands of persons entering the U.S. illegally each year were not uncommon. The implicit (and often explicit) assumption was that all of the undocumented inflow was being added to the population each year. The actual growth of the population would be well below the additions for a single year if emigration were taken into account. An undocumented population of 2 million, for example, would need only a 10 percent emigration rate to offset the addition of 200,000 undocumented immigrants during a year.

Domestic policy implications. The absence of information concerning emigration affects the administration of a range of domestic programs. The distribution of hundreds of thousands of dollars in Social Security checks to beneficiaries residing abroad each month is an example of the need for an understanding of U.S. citizen and non-U.S. citizen emigration. When payments first began in 1940, the 100 recipients abroad received a total of $12,000. By 1981, the figures had grown to 313,000 recipients abroad and nearly $1 billion in payments for that year.[13] (This figure does not include recipients who live abroad but have their Social Security checks deposited in U.S. banks.)

Congress often has expressed concern about payments to non-U.S citizens who work in the United States only long enough to become eligible for benefits and then return home to collect them for themselves and their families. In 1956, some restrictions were placed on beneficiaries abroad, but the law permitted so many exceptions that the changes had little effect. Recently, bills have been introduced to cut back future payments to non-U.S. citizens and eliminate some payments to all persons residing abroad.

Ethical issues aside, the costs of curtailing these benefits should be assessed on the basis of empirical information about emigration and its relationship to retirement and disability. Refunding to emigrants the amount they paid into the Social Security system, for example, could be more costly than continuing their benefits after they leave the country.

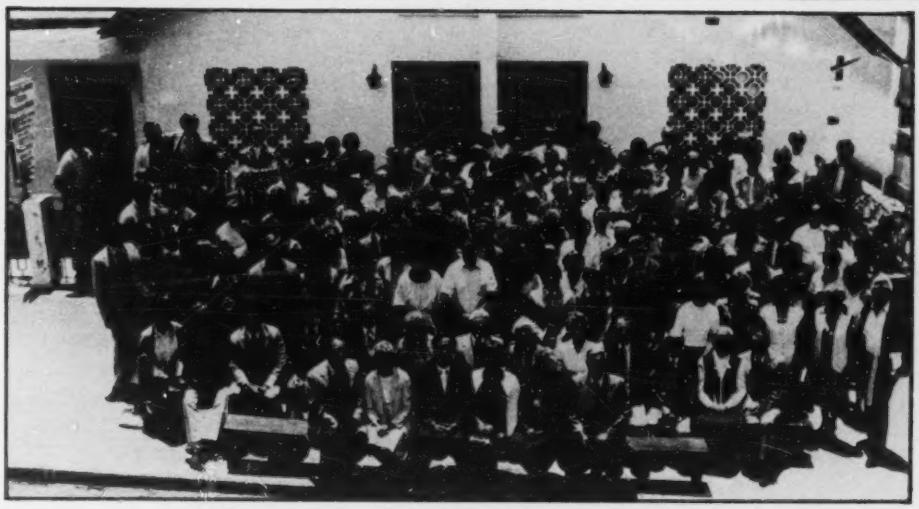
Also, an understanding of emigrants' experiences in this country and their reasons for leaving could lead to improvements in the institutions that serve newcomers. Potential problems faced by immigrants could be identified and assistance in the adjustment process could be offered.

Data Collection Methods

This statistical sketch of emigration from the United States was drawn from a variety of sources, each having inherent measurement problems. Recent data sources confirm that large numbers of people emigrate each year, but timely and complete information is lacking. To integrate emigration into policy discussions, a systematic approach to the collection of U.S. emigration data is needed.

Ideally, data on emigration should be accurate and

Missionaries in Ecuador, more than half are U.S. citizens.



timely, cover all categories of emigrants, be consistent over time, be sufficiently detailed (age, sex, state of residence, country of birth, etc.), and be measured with a minimum of unverifiable assumptions. Also, the data collection should be carried out at the lowest reasonable cost and with the least disruption of either travel or other data collection activities. Clearly, none of the sources of data used in this report approaches these standards. Alternative strategies exist, however, that could produce acceptable estimates at reasonable costs.

The two methods described briefly below could produce data useful for both policy discussion and improving U.S. population estimates. Each system of data collection has strengths and weaknesses; probably the clearest picture of emigration would be gained by undertaking both activities and using the results from each system to evaluate data from the other. The Census Bureau and the INS would be the logical agencies to oversee such data collection.

Multiplicity approach. Multiplicity, or network, sampling is probably the most promising technique for developing timely and consistent estimates of emigration from the United States. It involves adding a few questions each year to an ongoing survey, such as the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), to collect information from relatives about family members living abroad at the time of the survey.[14]

The data collection would be inexpensive relative to other methods and would not impede the flow of travelers. Also, the procedure would cover most categories of emigrants (former U.S. immigrants, U.S. citizens, temporary and long-term, etc.), would provide an opportunity to collect information on the characteristics of emigrants, and would generate timely data for policymakers and analysts.

Inevitably, however, there are difficulties. These include the possibility of omitting individuals and entire families who have emigrated and the likelihood that the survey will be too small to generate sufficiently detailed estimates, particularly at the state level.

Some of these problems can be overcome by comparing the results with other existing data and making appropriate adjustments. Accurate data are available for some federally-affiliated groups outside the country such as the Armed Forces, civilian employees of the federal government, and dependents of both groups. Data collected in other ways, such as the one described below, could serve to supplement and verify the emigration data collected using the multiplicity approach.

The use of this technique for measuring emigration is still in the developmental stage. It was tested in the Dominican Republic in 1979 using questions suggested by a working group on methodology of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.[15] In Mexico, a similar approach was used in 1977 to estimate the number of Mexican-born persons residing in the United States.[16] U.S. Census Bureau officials have proposed attaching questions to the CPS for one month to test the methodology and to determine whether current estimates of emigration can be made. The project should be given high priority.

International Passenger Survey. A survey of passengers departing the United States by air and sea could provide statistics on emigration if the sampling procedure were well designed and the data collection carefully monitored. Such surveys have been used in other countries, notably the United Kingdom.

The U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA) conducts an in-flight survey of international travelers leaving the U.S. to collect market research data, primarily for use by the tourism industry.[17] The survey's objectives could be broadened to collect emigration data since, in theory, it covers all passengers departing by air. The questionnaire used in the survey already generates demographic data on place of origin and destination, purpose of trip, age, sex, income and citizenship. The form could be revised to include additional migration-related items such as intended length of stay, occupation, and residence.

Using a passenger survey to collect information on emigration has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the statistical mechanism already exists for such a survey, all categories of emigrants would be covered, timely data could be produced, and the level of detail available could be determined by the sample size. On the other hand, it would be difficult to expand the scope of the survey to make adequate estimates of emigration across U.S. land borders, primarily because of the sheer volume of border traffic.

Also, the present USTTA survey has a low response rate that could seriously bias the data produced. These problems are not insurmountable, but a major effort would be required before adequate estimates could be produced.

In Conclusion

Despite the lack of precise statistics, we know emigration has accompanied immigration throughout the 20th century and that the phenomenon has gained momentum in recent years. Between 1900 and 1980 more than 30 million immigrants were admitted for residence in this country; approximately 10 million (mainly former immigrants and their children) emigrated during the same period. Although current figures are not available, estimates made for the 19"0s indicate that non-U.S. citizen emigration exceeded 100,000 annually and that U.S. citizen emigration may have increased to roughly the same level.

After reviewing the elusive and often incomplete data on emigration from the U.S., what conclusions can we reach? First, we should recognize that emigration is a signficant demographic phenomenon with important consequences for various sectors of public policy. Second, we should get on with the task of measuring outward movement from the United States in order to raise the quality of our national and local population estimates, to develop a statistical foundation for research and policy analysis, and to broaden our perspective on international migration.

Footnotes

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Definitions and Methods

The term emigration used in this report refers to persons changing their usual residence from the United States to other countries (i.e., long-term migrants rather than visitors, tourists, students or others departing temporarily). This definition is theoretically straightforward, but defining and measuring emigration accurately can be quite complex. Some persons leave the United States with the intention of residing abroad, but later return to the United States. Others go to their country of birth for a short visit, and decide not to return to the United States. Many U.S. residents work abroad for much of the year. Our intention was to include only those estimates that reflect relatively long-term movement of U.S. residents from the United States.

Three methods were used to derive the data in this report: statistics collected upon departure; estimates derived through analysis of demographic data; and estimates of the number of U.S. citizens arriving in or residing in other countries. Detailed discussions of data sources and methodology are available in the references on the previous page; here we summarize the methods and give a brief assessment of potential biases in the data.

Emigration statistics, 1900 to 1949. The emigration statistics for 1908 to 1949 (Table 1 and Figure 1) were collected annually by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for non-U.S. citizens during the entire period and for U.S. citizens between 1918 and 1950. Estimates for 1900 to 1907 were made by the INS (reference 3). The emigration statistics would be too low if the INS failed to record all departures or if persons who intended to depart for a brief period failed to return to the United States. The statistics overestimate net migration to the extent that "permanent" emigrants returned to the United States after only a brief stay abroad.

Emigration of non-U.S. citizens, 1950 to 1979. The figures for 1950 to 1959 (Table 1 and Figure 1) were derived using annual INS statistics for 1950 to 1957 and estimates of total emigration for the decade derived from Census Bureau and INS statistics on the foreign-born population (reference 3).

The figures for 1960 to 1979 were calculated using INS annual registration data and estimates of the components of non-U.S. citizen population change. We can illustrate the methodology used with an approximate calculation for non-U.S. citizen emigration for the 1960 to 1970 period. The components of change for this population can be represented as:

(1) $P_{70} = P_{60} + I_{60\text{-}70} - N_{60\text{-}70} - D_{60\text{-}70} - E_{60\text{-}70}$

where,

P_{60} and P_{70} are the non-U.S. citizen population in January 1960 and 1970 respectively;

$I_{60\text{-}70}$ is the number of immigrants admitted for permanent residence between 1960 and 1970;

$N_{60\text{-}70}$ is the number of non-U.S. citizens naturalized between 1960 and 1970;

$D_{60\text{-}70}$ is the number of deaths among non-U.S. citizens between 1960 and 1970; and

$E_{60\text{-}70}$ is the number of non-U.S. citizen emigrants between 1960 and 1970.

From equation (1), equation (2) below can be arranged:

(2) $E_{60\text{-}70} = P_{60} - P_{70} + I_{60\text{-}70} - N_{60\text{-}70} - D_{60\text{-}70}$

Published figures are available for P_{60}, P_{70}, $I_{60\text{-}70}$ and $N_{60\text{-}70}$. $D_{60\text{-}70}$ was estimated using a crude death rate of 10.4 per 1,000. The crude death rate was derived from 1970 census data for non-U.S. citizens by age, sex and country of origin and U.S. mortality rates.

For the 1960-1970 period the figures (in thousands) for equation (2) are:

$E_{60\text{-}70} = 2{,}943 - 3{,}815 + 3{,}268 - 1{,}125 - 351$
$E_{60\text{-}70} = 920$

This estimate is very close to the figure of 900,000 for 1960 to 1970 shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

The data for P_{60} and P_{70} are from INS registration

for 1960 and 1970. The accuracy of estimated emigration can be affected by changes in the completeness of registration. If coverage improved between 1960 and 1970, emigration would be underestimated; if coverage declined, emigration would be overestimated. While we have no direct information about the relative completeness of registration in 1970 compared to 1960, there is evidence that the 1970 INS registration was reasonably complete. In January 1970 about 3.8 million resident non-U.S. citizens registered with INS, which was above the comparable 1970 census figure of about 3.5 million. The census figure is too low because hundreds of thousands of foreign-born persons erroneously reported themselves as U.S. citizens. Nonetheless, the INS and census figures were at roughly the same level in 1970. Thus, it is unlikely that a serious decline in INS registration between 1960 and 1970 could have accounted for the estimate of emigration during the period.

The estimate of non-U.S. citizen emigration for the 1960-1970 period is supported by information from a separate source. Based on an analysis of the 1960 and 1970 census counts of the foreign-born population, Robert Warren and Jennifer Marks Peck estimated *foreign-born* emigration at about 1.1 million between the 1960 and 1970 censuses.[18]

Emigration of U.S. citizens. The estimates of U.S. citizens moving abroad during the past few decades are described in references 5 and 7. The data on immigration to other countries from the United States are minimum figures because not all countries are included. On the other hand, the net effect of citizen emigration from the U.S. is overstated because no information was available for subsequent return movement to the United States. Estimates of U.S. citizen departures were not include in Table 1 or Figure 1 for the period after 1960 because acceptable estimates of net movement of U.S. citizens could not be made.

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